



# News Release

## IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

1301 N. Orchard St., Boise, ID 83706 - TEL: (208) 327-7900 FAX: (208) 327-7866

Internet Homepage: <http://www.idwr.state.id.us>

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### **IDWR TO CONSIDER PETITION FOR MORATORIUM ON NEW RATHDRUM PRAIRIE WATER RIGHT APPLICATIONS**

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For Media Information Contact:  
Dick Larsen - (208) 327-7933

State water managers will now move to consider a petition requesting a moratorium on new applications for ground water rights on the Rathdrum Prairie aquifer, the Idaho Department of Water Resources announced today.

IDWR officials say they hope to make a decision on the moratorium petition by the end of the year. The Department has scheduled a pair of special public information meetings in September to get input from North Idaho residents about the moratorium petition.

Domestic water uses would not be affected by a moratorium. The petition asked that the moratorium exempt water use applications smaller than 2 cubic feet per second (1.29 million gallons per day). However, IDWR has made no decision on that element of the petition.

Senior IDWR water management officials will attend and conduct the meetings. The specific format for the two meetings has not yet been decided upon; however, they are not formal public hearings but more of a fact-finding process designed to gauge how area residents stand on the issue.

The public meetings are set for September 17 at the Idaho Department of Transportation conference room in Hayden Lake. Two sessions will be held: 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. The ITD conference room is located at 600 W. Prairie in Hayden Lake.

A group of four environmental organizations petitioned IDWR back in March to establish a moratorium that would delay processing of new ground water right applications until proposed hydrologic studies of the Rathdrum Aquifer have been completed.

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IDWR Considers Moratorium Petition – Page 2 of 2

IDWR is required by law to act on petitions, but deferred action until contested case hearings and decisions were completed on two applications for ground water use from the aquifer, both of which had been filed more than a year earlier. Decisions in those two hearings have been completed. IDWR officials say it is now appropriate for the agency to move forward with action on the moratorium petition.

IDWR has expressed its support for hydrologic and model studies of the aquifer and is currently cooperating in efforts by state and local entities to secure approval and funding for the studies.

Direct public input is just one element IDWR officials will consider as they determine whether or not a moratorium is appropriate. The Department also will consider a variety of other information including existing technical data; present water supply, use and availability figures; and, other technical data such as aquifer recharge, water use budgets and other management and supply factors.

Idaho water law requires the agency to consider whether moratorium action is required to protect existing vested water rights; to prevent violation of minimum stream flows under the Comprehensive State Water Plan; and its impact on the accepting and processing of new water right applications.